



# Pest e-alerts



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## Army Cutworms Reported in Canola

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Although we normally think of army cutworms as a pest of winter wheat, they are also a concern in canola, a crop that is expanding in Oklahoma. I wrote an article about army cutworms in wheat back in February, but field reports from Heath Sanders indicate that canola is taking a hit in Blaine, Custer, and Dewey counties. Thus, canola growers need to keep a vigilant eye on their canola crop. Army cutworms can cause severe stand loss in canola if not controlled. Cutworm damage often goes unnoticed through the winter because the caterpillars grow slowly

and don't get big enough to cause noticeable damage until temperatures warm in the spring. They can cut out stand as they feed, killing the canola growing point. Because they like to hide below the soil surface during the day, they can go unnoticed unless they are physically brought up from their sleeping chambers. Sample a field by stirring or digging the soil to a depth of two inches at 5 or more locations. The cutworms will be "greenish grey", and will probably curl up into a tight "C" when disturbed. The suggested treatment threshold for cutworms in canola is 1-2 per row-foot. Current recommendations for control of army cutworms in canola are listed in [CR-7667, Management of Insect and Mite Pests in Canola](#).

## Plant Disease Corner – What we're seeing in the PDIDL!

Jennifer Olson, Asst. Extension Specialist, Plant Disease Diagnostician,  
Damon Smith, Horticulture Crops Extension Pathologist  
John Damicone, Extension Plant Pathologist

### Leaf spots caused by fungi

Over the past few weeks, we have received physical samples and digital images of fungal leaf spots on photinia, holly and hibiscus. The extended periods of cool, wet weather are conducive to disease development in environments where the fungus is present. Woody ornamentals that are evergreen or that have been held-over in greenhouses are most likely to exhibit damage.

Leaf spot diseases are most severe on plants that are under stress from environmental or cultural conditions such as damage caused by cold temperatures and winter desiccation. Health and vigor should be maintained by properly watering and fertilizing the plants. It is often helpful to remove and destroy fallen leaves to reduce the amount of inoculum (fungal propagules) that is present and could initiate new infections. Overhead watering should be avoided and plants should be spaced to promote air circulation and to encourage rapid drying of the foliage. In most situations, fungal leaf spots cause aesthetic damage, but do not seriously injure the plant. However, if defoliation is severe, fungicide applications may be needed. Please contact the PDIDL if you need additional guidance.



Leaves of Red-tip photinia with fungal leaf spot. Photo courtesy of Jeff Bedwell.

### Pink Root on Onion Transplants

In the last Pest e-Alert in the article on Vegetable Transplant Health, Dr. John Damicone mentioned that onion transplants with pink root had been submitted to the PDIDL. Please review this article (<http://entopl.okstate.edu/pddl/2010/PA9-6.pdf>) because planting infected transplants is an excellent method of introducing a new pathogen into a growing site.

This week, we received a phone call from a home gardener in Tulsa. The home gardener indicated that she recently purchased onion transplants and had forgotten about them for about a week. When she opened the sack, the onions had a foul odor and pinkish-white mold was observed growing on the plants. Some of the roots appeared pinkish-red. She wanted to know if she could plant the onions. In case you thought the answer was no, I told her yes. Certainly she *could* plant the onions, but it was **NOT** recommended. The pathogen that causes

pink root can survive for several years in infested soils and the disease is difficult to control. Some isolates of the pathogen can cause disease on cantaloupe, carrot, cauliflower, cucumber, eggplant, English pea, pepper, spinach, squash, tomato... No, she should not plant the onion transplants.



Onion roots with pinkish-red discoloration from pink root disease.

### **Crown Gall**

In the past month, we have received multiple samples of deciduous, woody trees with obvious overgrowths which are known as galls. Although the galls are most common at the crown or soil-line (hence the name crown gall), they may be observed both on roots and branches of infected plants. We frequently observe overgrowths near the graft union on grafted plants and sometimes slightly below the soil-line.

Crown gall in most deciduous, woody trees is caused by the bacterium *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* and this organism can survive in soils where infected plants were grown. The bacterium can also survive on the surface of roots of many weeds without causing a visible gall. If infected plants are observed, they should be removed and the area should be left fallow (unplanted) for as long as possible. Grasses (monocots) tend to be poor hosts for the pathogen and if possible they should be selected for replanting. If new plants are to be installed, they should be thoroughly examined (shoots and roots) to ensure that they are healthy and no evidence of crown gall is present. Fruit trees (apple, peach, and nectarine) are highly susceptible to this disease.



Crown gall on an infected *Prunus* which was available for purchase until submitted to the PDIDL.

### **A Request to Our Readers**

If you receive disease samples in the County Extension Offices that you regard as routine, please let us know about them. You can email me ([jen.olson@okstate.edu](mailto:jen.olson@okstate.edu)) or call the PDIDL at 405-744-9961. In some cases, the PDIDL is not aware that a disease is common in your area and when a sample is sent in directly from a home gardener, we become concerned that something unusual has occurred. By alerting us that you are routinely seeing a certain disease, we can better monitor the situation and advise others in the area. Additionally, if we learn that certain diseases are common, or specific hosts are often brought in to the county offices, we can design new fact sheets that help address these areas. Your help is appreciated.

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*Director, Plant Disease and Insect Diagnostic Laboratory*

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